AAC Prompt Hierarchy

Least

Most

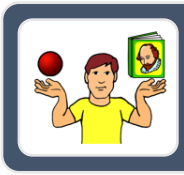
Pause – sometimes a pause is all that's needed. It gives the person time to respond – wait quietly (wait at least 10-15 seconds).

Non-verbal prompt – use body language and facial expressions to show that you expect a response.

Environmental cues – use objects in the environment as cues (e.g. show food or toy choices).

Ask an open-ended question (What should we do next? What do you need me to do?).

Visual prompt - Gesture or point toward the low-tech board or device without pointing directly to the target word.



Give two choices (Do you want to read or play?).

Model - model an appropriate response on a device or low-tech board.

Partial physical prompt - provide support to the elbow.

Physical prompt - hand under hand provides support, but allows the individual to make his/her their own selection.

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Guiding Principles

- **The Goal is Communication** – if the individual communicates (via voice, sign, gesture, etc.) acknowledge the communication and model the target word, but don't require the individual to "say it with his/her device."
- **The Goal is Independent Communication** – many individuals become prompt dependent because people over-prompt. It's important to pause and give the individual time to process the language and respond. It's important to fade the prompts as soon as possible.
- **Modeling** (Aided Language Stimulation) is often the best way to promote independent communication. Model without expecting a response.
- **Communication should be FUN** – make sure you are teaching with fun activities. Individuals should 'want' to engage, not be 'required' to participate.
- **Physical Prompting** should not be used to force children to communicate with the device or board, but rather for children who need assistance learning the motor plan for a new word.
- **Physical Prompting** should be used with caution and quickly faded so individuals don't become prompt dependent.

5 Things to Consider about Prompts in AAC – (From PrAACticalAAC Sept. 13, 2013)
By Carol Zangari

1. Sometimes, actually MANY times, a 'perfect pause' is all that's needed.
2. It's important to consider both the type of prompt (e,g., gestural, verbal, physical) and how much information that prompt provides to the learner.
3. Prompt hierarchies are essential elements of any clinical toolkit.
4. Not sure where to start with prompt hierarchies? In general,
    - Most-to-least for a new skill, device, or page set
    - Least-to-most for an emerging skill that is inconsistent
5. In the hands of a skillful clinician, prompts can speed up the learning process. But, as soon as we begin using them, we should develop a plan to fade them so that the AAC learner becomes progressively more independent.

http://praacticalaac.org/praactical/5-things-to-consider-about-prompts-in-teaching-aac/

Pause – allow plenty of time for student responses
(From Miami-Dade County Public Schools)

Some children that use augmentative communication need extra processing time when they are asked to respond or participate in an activity. Some of the things they need to process are:

- The language/message being presented by the adult
- The fact that they are expected to respond
- What the response will be
- How that response is represented on their communication system
- What muscles to move to indicate their response

http://prekese.dadeschools.net/AdaptationStation/aac.html

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